CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A unit dose package comprising a flexible paperboard or plastic portion formed as a series of contiguous panels; and a rigid, molded plastic locking element.

2. A unit dose package according to claim 1 further comprising a structure for containing unit doses within the package interior.

3. A unit dose package according to claim 1 composed of:

a) a paperboard portion comprising:

(i) a top panel having an extension foldable in relation to the top panel; the extension having included thereon one or more blisters for holding unit dose materials; and the top panel and extension panel each having one or more slots near one edge thereof;

(ii) a bottom panel having a depression means located therein;

(iii) a side panel foldably connected to the top panel and the bottom panel; and

b) a molded plastic locking element.

4. A unit dose package according to claim 3 wherein the molded plastic locking element comprises:

a) a pair of side panels and a pair of end panels forming a rigid rectangular package frame;

b) a frame base positioned parallel to and against the bottom panel of the paperboard portion to form a rigid tray;

c) a slidable locking tongue within the tray; said locking tongue having located at one end a trigger mechanism, and having located at the other end a curved dowel; and

d) a locking flap attached to one end panel of the package frame; said locking flap comprising a dependent tab protruding downward and perpendicularly therefrom and engageable with the curved dowel;

wherein the depression means of the paperboard portion corresponds with the trigger mechanism of the molded plastic locking element;

and the slots in the top panel and the extension panel of the paperboard portion cooperate to form a slot for passthrough of the dependent tab of the locking mechanism.

5. The unit dose package of claim 4 wherein the curved dowel comprises a lateral tab protruding perpendicularly therefrom, and the dependent tab of the locking flap further comprises a slot within said tab for engagement of the lateral tab.

6. The unit dose package of claim 4 wherein the depression means is a button, notch, tab or cutout.

7. The unit dose package of claim 4 wherein the trigger mechanism is a pull ring.

8. The unit dose package of claim 1 wherein the paperboard portion is formed from C1S or C2S bleached or unbleached paperboard.

9. The unit dose package of claim 8 wherein the paperboard portion is laminated with a polymeric material.

10. A method of packaging unit dose materials comprising:

a) forming a locking element comprising a lock element and a release element;

b) cutting a blank from a flexible paperboard or plastic material;

c) folding and attaching the blank to the locking element; and

d) inserting one or more doses of a unit dose material within the container.

11. The method of claim 10 comprising forming the locking element from a rigid plastic material and a flexible plastic material.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein the locking element is formed to include a slidable locking tongue, a frame base and a locking flap.

13. The method of claim 10 wherein the blank is formed to include a bottom panel having a slot or cutout therein; a pair of end panels, each foldably connected at opposing ends of the bottom panel; and a top panel optionally including one or more extensions thereof.

14. The method of claim 10 wherein the unit dose materials are inserted in one or more blisters mounted on the paperboard portion.

15. The method of claim 12 wherein the blisters are mounted on the one or more extensions of the top panel.

16. The method of claim 9 when the unit dose materials are contained in individual containment vessels within the container.

17. A molded locking element for a package having a flexible paperboard or plastic portion composed of:

(a) a locking element comprising a frame, a slidable locking tongue and a locking flap; and

(b) a lock release element.

18. The locking element of claim 17 wherein the frame is comprised of panels forming a polygonal package frame, and a frame base that is defined to accommodate the slidable locking tongue.

19. The locking element of claim 18 wherein the frame includes two side panels and two end panels connected to form rectangular frame, the end panels being of lesser in height and length in relation to the side panels; and wherein one of said end panels provides a point of attachment for the locking flap.

20. The locking element of claim 17 wherein the locking tongue is terminated at one end by a pull ring.